

DISSENTING VIEWS

We oppose H.R. 3998 for both substantive and procedural reasons. Seven of the ten Titles and their underlying bills are good bills that should have passed out of Committee by unanimous consent. They are: The Harry S Truman Birthplace Study Act, The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Extension Study Act, Battle of Matewan Study Act, Battle of Camden Study Act, Fort San Geronimo Study Act, Wolf House Study Act, and the Butterfield Overland Trail Study Act. The Stranahan House, Trading Post and Campsite Study Act is unworthy of passage and could have serious implications for private property rights.

Title IX, the Stranahan House, Trading Post and Campsite Study Act is part of a continuing attempt by the owners and some very wealthy supporters of the Stranahan House in Fort Lauderdale, Florida to stop development by almost any means necessary on adjacent private land. The owners of the adjacent property located at 500 East Las Olas Boulevard have successfully fought the Stranahan House for nearly a decade to have use of the land they own. These efforts have included the Stranahan House getting the City of Fort Lauderdale to condemn the land (which a court dismissed) and filing numerous suits against the property owners and the city to stop development. By directing the National Park Service, which did not support the underlying bill H.R. 3120, to study the adjacent property the bill will cast a threatening shadow of condemnation over the property and threatening further interference with the landowner's private property rights. All evidence shows that Members who were asked to cosponsor H.R. 3120 were not told it included studying land owned by unwilling participants. Incredibly, only after the hearing on H.R. 3120 was the owners of 500 East Las Olas Boulevard informed they were included in the study. Real estate appraisers currently value the property at approximately \$90 million dollars.

Committee Democrats claim that this is "just a study" and is needed "to know what used to be there and was of historical and cultural importance." How can a study of this type that specifically names a particular parcel of property not interfere with the use of a landowner's property? Given the history of abuse by the owners and supporters of the Stranahan House it is likely that ANY finding of "historical and cultural importance" during the course of the study will likely be used as justification for either condemning the land or restricting the use of the property by local officials or the National Park Service to "preserve" the Stranahan House. The owners of 500 East Las Olas Boulevard, in addition to spending millions defending the right to have domain over their property, have repeatedly stated in letters to Congress and the press that they in no way wish to participate in the study or wish to sell their land. At mark up, every Democrat present voted against an amend-

ment to remove the private landowners who did not want their property studied. In an editorial about a recent legal loss by the Stranahan House against the adjacent landowners, even the liberal Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel stated "it's time Stranahan House advocates finally realize it's time to fold 'em." This bill will only breath new life into this abuse of power.

This bill illustrates how Committee Democrats have ushered in a new era of "Park Barrel Politics", an egregious practice of greasing the skids of bad bills through the legislative process by bundling together truly terrible park bills with worthy ones in massive omnibus packages to win votes. The less debate and the faster it can be rammed through the House, the better it is for the Majority. Committee Democrats quickly scuttled their promise to hold National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee mark ups after the first and only one they held produced healthy debate and votes on amendments. A Subcommittee mark up on H.R. 3998 may have cured many of the problems the bill has. Committee Democrats laughably tried to insinuate that H.R. 3998 has 82 cosponsors by adding up all the cosponsors of the 10 underlying bills. Support of part is not support of all. How one can claim support of a bill to study the birthplace of President Truman can be translated into support for a study of the most expensive National Park in our Nation's history is beyond reason.

Committee Democrats clearly displayed their anti-private property and Second Amendment rights agenda in markup by gutting simple Republican amendments. One such amendment would have required the National Park Service to disclose the changes that will be imposed on hunting rights on newly acquired federal land. Another amendment would have required the National Park Service to include in their study the impact federalization will have on the risk of wildfire and the ensuing fire insurance rate increases. We are troubled that the Democrats are so eager to federalize private and state land, but are unwilling to allow the public to find out what the consequences are.

In conclusion, while this bill is flawed, we look forward to finding reasonable compromises on the Floor of the House under an open rule where a fair and open debate may occur.

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